Are there benefits of speaking a foreign language?

Recently, the following quote from Franc Smith, a Canadian psycholinguist, has gained popularity: «One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way». Indeed, in the course of globalization multilingualism has acquired numerous advantages; opportunities provided by it have increased and it is currently claimed to be the most practical skill one can possess [1]. Language learning is declared to play a crucial part in global collaboration, successful international marketplace and tourism field [2]. Apparently, there are multiple benefits of language study and this essay seeks to illustrate some of them that seem to be ones of the most essential.

Firstly, there is a great deal of research on the interdependence of bilingualism and career opportunities. According to it, speaking a second language candidates are more likely to be considered by 50% of employers than monolingual individuals. In most cases both large and small companies tend to select adaptable and skilful applicants who are capable of meeting versatile cultural norms and establishing communication with foreign clients and alleged external counterparts [3]. Furthermore, referring to some studies, multilingual agents in average get a higher salary than their single-language colleagues and are more likely to be promoted [1]. In addition, chances of getting a job abroad can be enhanced by 10-15% due to language proficiency [4]. Therefore, with the help of this fact it can be judged that there is a transparent distinction between possibilities of professional growth of multilingual and monolingual individuals.

Secondly, it seems likely that bilingualism can be useful while travelling and contribute to surmounting possible misunderstandings [4]. The survey carried out in 2016 among 2000 former students worldwide who had taken part in language training abroad shows us that the majority of interviewees felt more assertive travelling overseas by virtue of their language skills. Moreover, at the end of the traineeship their languages abilities ameliorated as well [5]. Undoubtedly, such results were expected, since linguistic proficiency facilitates communication and full comprehension between persons of different cultures.

In contrast, there is an opinion that though knowledge of foreign languages can provide one with a multitude of possibilities, it still does not possess the significance ascribed to it. According to statistics of 2018, 40% of world population are monolingual [6] and are comfortable

with it. They successfully develop in their professional fields not connected with languages and do not aspire to learn one [7]. Besides, some evidence highlights that there are many prosperous monolingual people in the world, so being multilingual is not significant to be successful [8]. Adherents of this idea also claim that it has become possible to find a job abroad almost effortlessly without knowing foreign languages since language proficiency requirements are decreasing because of globalization [9]. As for travelling, some people are convinced that visiting places of interest and broadening one's knowledge of countries and cultures does not demand fluency in languages [10]. In their opinion, there are some behavioural patterns that can be used by a monolingual person, such as being courteous and observant, using body language, avoidance of using gestures in various parts of the world, following the accepted rules of eye contact, physical touch, the concept of proximity, etc. Moreover, supporters of this point of view assert that Maps, GPS and translation apps can provide an individual with necessary awareness and knowledge [11]. After seeing the enumerated evidence, we can acknowledge that opponents of the initial idea have a point in thinking like that. Nevertheless, Eton Institute's Language Development in the Workforce Survey in September 2014 shows that 89% of their customers claimed that multilingual specialists increased the value of the personnel and 88% of them were convinced in the significance of the presence of employees that speak numerous languages [12]. In addition, people possessing a multilingual ability take precedence nowadays, which is vindicated by BBC's estimate, according to which bilingual people earn $128,000 more over a forty-year career [13]. Therefore, in most cases multilingualism is vital and plays a crucial part when it comes to career. Moreover, in regard to the issue of travelling, everything listed seems to be not enough to feel self-confident and to be safe in another country. It is generally accepted that knowledge of foreign languages makes a person aware of their surroundings, makes them more vigilant and, consequently, they are less likely to become victims of pickpockets or to face other unpleasant problems. Besides, communicating with local residents is claimed to be more convenient in navigation than using translation apps for every street sign. Likewise, it is thought to be the best way of getting closer to the culture of a country and to absorb its atmosphere [4]. Furthermore, due to communication with locals it is possible to save money and to escape the so-called «tourist trap» [14]. In other words, it is doubtful that travelling experience can be limited only by intuitional patterns of behaviour, usage of certain tools and incapability to support a conversation in a foreign language. It is also

vital for the right perception of the culture, which again proves the benefit of speaking at least two languages.

To conclude, this assignment has addressed a significant issue of monolingualism and multilingualism and has shown that in the modern world there still is a question whether learning foreign languages has advantages. The evidence presented in the essay has shown that despite the fact that approximately half the world speaks only one language, bilingual and multilingual people still have precedence in career opportunities and travelling experience.

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